



FRIENDS OF LECLAIRE NEWSLETTER

April 2020

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NICKEL PLATE STATION: MOVING ON DOWN THE ROAD



The 1883 Nickel Plate Station as it is moved to its new location. (Photos by Cindy Reinhardt)

On March 4, area residents were able to watch as the Nickel Plate Station was moved to its new location at the entrance of the LCCC Campus. In 1991, the Goshen Preservation Alliance moved the station a short distance when they learned the railroad was going to tear it down. It was placed on a temporary foundation in a temporary location. It took nearly 30 years, has now found a permanent home.

Additional pictures and a short video taken during the move can be found on the “Historic LeClaire” Facebook page.

Friends of LeClaire has donated \$1,500 towards restoration of the Nickel Plate Station which was a major factor in N. O. Nelson’s decision to locate the Village of LeClaire here. After renovation, the

station will become an annex to Edwardsville’s Children’s Museum.

To make a donation toward the restoration of the historic Nickel Plate Station, visit the Edwardsville Community Foundation’s donor page at <https://app.donorview.com/LQn6>

Or send a check made payable to “Edwardsville Community Foundation” (“Nickel Plate Station” in the subject line) and mail to:

Edwardsville Community Foundation
P. O. Box 102
Edwardsville, IL 62025

For further information about this project contact SJ Morrison at 618-558-3062 or email stm11@hotmail.com.



N. O. NELSON

A NORWEGIAN IMMIGRANT

Mike and Cindy Reinhardt attended the Norwegian Society of St. Louis’s “Spring Thaw” on March 8. Cindy presented a program on LeClaire so these descendants of Norway could learn more about another Norwegian immigrant, N. O. Nelson.

LeClaire’s founder, N. O. Nelson, and his family emigrated to America in 1844 when he was only 2 years old. He grew up in a Norwegian community where he became proficient in both Norwegian and English. He was proud of the fact that he could speak either language without an accent.

If you belong to an organization or have a classroom that would like to learn about LeClaire’s unique history or about Mr. Nelson, please contact Friends of LeClaire at 618-656-1294.



The Norwegian flag.

FOL ANNUAL MEETING MAY 12

The annual meeting of the Friends of LeClaire, normally held in April, has been postponed to Tuesday, May 12, at 7 p. m. in Room 201 of Building N4 at the Nelson Campus of LCCC in LeClaire.

If the meeting needs to be further postponed due to concerns about the COVID-19 virus, FOL members will be notified via Facebook (Historic LeClaire) and email. All April events, including our spring clean-up have been postponed. If you do not receive email notices about FOL meetings or are not on Facebook, please let us know if we should notify you by phone of a cancellation.

Members of Friends of LeClaire are encouraged to contact Andi Smith at 692-7343 if they are interested in serving on the board of Friends of LeClaire which consists of a president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer and three trustees. Nominations will also be accepted from the floor at the annual meeting.

Friends of LeClaire is a 501(c) charitable organization that focuses on the preservation of the history and public spaces of the former Village of LeClaire. All meetings are open to the public. Members are encouraged to attend to learn more about the organization and the historic LeClaire neighborhood.

CURRENT NEWS

FOL ANNUAL REPORT

This past year some of our normal activities were curtailed somewhat. It was wet, the fifth wettest year on record. Not that we're complaining. It did not rain on our 28th Annual Leclaire Parkfest and the Hale Avenue construction was completed in time despite all the rain. October 20 was a beautiful day, and the crowd was as large as ever. Vendor coordinator Theresa Morrison said she was going to cut back on vendors, but we ended up with the most ever.

As always, thanks to all our volunteers at Parkfest and throughout the year. There are a myriad of tasks that have to be done before, during, and after Parkfest. This year the preparation was complicated by the construction on Hale Avenue. Alternative plans had to be considered in case the project was delayed. Despite the rain and other complications, the street and park were ready ahead of time. We thank the Department of Public Works and Keller Construction for their hard work and cooperation. They even sodded the parts of the park that had been dug up. Thanks also go to the Parks and Recreation Department and the Public Safety Department for their help and cooperation.

As mentioned at the start, the weather forced the cancellation of four scheduled appearances at the Goshen Market, the Edwardsville Municipal Band's June concert in Leclaire Park and the Friends of Leclaire Ice Cream Social. However, the Friends kept busy. We had four newsletters, website updates, a water station at the Bonifest 5k, a Ward 5 aldermanic forum, a information table at the Route 66 Festival, park clean-up days, planting and maintenance of the flower gardens at Leclaire Park, volunteering with landscaping at the Children's Museum, the donation of a new mural depicting the history of Leclaire and a poster of N. O. Nelson to the Children's Museum, new notecards and prints of Leclaire, a donation of \$1,500 towards the restoration of the Nickel Plate Station, new members, and finally a holiday social to celebrate the past year.

2020 will be the 130th birthday of the founding of Leclaire, the 29th birthday of the Friends of Leclaire, and our 29th Parkfest. We are looking forward to another great year. Thank you for your membership, support, and help.

From FOL President Mike Reinhardt

CONSTRUCTION NEARS COMPLETION

The finishing touches on the Hale Avenue construction project will be completed soon. Replacing signs, adding sod and other remaining projects are all dependent on warm weather.

GONE, BUT NEVER FORGOTTEN

Since the last newsletter, Friends of Leclaire was saddened to learn of the deaths of several long-time members of Friends of Leclaire. Jane Fralinger, Don and Evelyn Schaake and Bonnie Wehrend were all homeowners and residents of Leclaire for 50-60 years as well as members of Friends of Leclaire.

Bonnie Wehrend was a founding member of the organization and also participated in the planning and organization of the 1990 Leclaire Centennial celebration. For her, it was a family affair that included her daughter, Jean Hughes, and grandson, Steve Hughes - a three-generation commitment to Friends of Leclaire! Her former home on Longfellow Avenue is one of those profiled in this newsletter.

Don and Evelyn Schaake had their first date at Leclaire Park, then early in their marriage bought a home in Leclaire where they raised their family. The Schaake and Fralinger families both moved to Leclaire in the 1960s.

Dolores Rohrkaste was 96 when she passed away recently. She had not lived in Leclaire since her girlhood as Dolores Howerton of Ruskin Avenue, but it was dear to her heart, and she was generous with sharing photographs and memories of the neighborhood. These memories reflecting life in Leclaire in the 1920s and 1930s were greatly appreciated. Dolores' Leclaire Kindergarten workbooks were donated to the Madison County Historical Society.



Bonnie Lou Wehrend
(Hughes family)



Miss Dolores Howerton,
ready for prom, on Ruskin
Avenue in 1941.
(Dolores Rohrkaste)

THANK YOU!

Friends of Leclaire are grateful for the wonderful hospitality extended by Al and Kim Pauli who hosted the Friends of Leclaire Holiday Social in December. The company of friends and neighbors, delicious food, and lively conversation always make the annual party a special occasion.

About Friends of Leclaire

Friends of Leclaire (FOL) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting and enhancing the history and heritage of the Leclaire National Historic District. The organization promotes Leclaire's heritage through advocacy, education and community involvement. Membership is just \$20 annually. To join, send dues to Friends of Leclaire, P. O. Box 644, Edwardsville, IL 62025. For information, call 618-656-1294.

FOL conducts business meetings at 7 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month except in December when the regular meeting is replaced with a holiday social and January when it's just too cold!

All members are welcome to attend meetings which are held in Room 201 of Building N4 at the Historic N. O. Nelson Campus of Lewis & Clark Community College in Edwardsville.

The quarterly Friends of Leclaire Newsletter is written and edited by Cindy Reinhardt. Contact her at cynreinhardt@yahoo.com with questions or feedback.

LIFE ON LONGFELLOW AVENUE



These photographs of the houses on the 1000 block of Longfellow Avenue were taken for an Edwardsville housing survey in 1995. The photographer was Steve Hughes, and the photos included his grandmother's house at 1018. The houses are, from left (North) 1018, 1020, 1022 and 1024 Longfellow Avenue. (City of Edwardsville)

On the 1000 block of Longfellow Avenue in Leclaire, are four crisp white Craftsman homes, all well-cared for, all built at a time when they had a front porch view of the trains going by, and all are approaching their centennial anniversary. Although there are similarities, the houses are all different as are their histories.

1018 Longfellow – Eva Carlton House

A century ago, Hotz Lumber often purchased lots and built homes in Edwardsville and Leclaire on spec. That was likely the case with this house. The undeveloped lot was sold to Wilfred Hotz and within months was sold to Eva Carlton, who purchased it as an investment property.

Eva Young Carlton was born in 1881 in New Douglas, Illinois. She married in 1905, but was widowed in 1911. After the death of her husband she became an elementary school teacher who taught in area schools for nearly 30 years. She retired to Edwardsville where she had numerous relatives.

During and after World War II, a shortage of building materials created a robust housing market for sellers, so it is probably no coincidence that Eva Carlton sold the house in 1947, the same year that the house next door was also sold. The new owners, Morris and Bernadine Kirchner, only stayed five years before selling it in 1952.

Martin and Bonnie Wehrend, the new residents, were already familiar with the neighborhood since Bonnie's brother, Robert Kreuzberg, owned the house next door at 1020 Longfellow Avenue. Although the Wehrends moved into the house in 1952, they didn't own it until 1955. When they moved in, this charming home, at last, had a family that intended to stay. The Wehrend family occupied the house for over 60 years.

1020 Longfellow – George Buch House

George Buch bought this lot from his mother after his father's death in 1928. In 1883, when George was just two years old, he came to America with his German immigrant parents, Christoph and Margaret Buch. Like his father, George was a carpenter/house builder and built the house at 1020 Longfellow Ave. himself. George never lived in the house. He built it on spec, intending to sell it as soon as possible. Unfortunately for George, the house wasn't completed until June 1930, shortly after the beginning of the Great Depression. The local newspapers of the time show a long series of advertisements where he tried to sell the house without success. Within a year, he settled into life as a landlord.

George and his wife owned the house until selling it to the Eugene Shepard family in 1947. The Shepards were not there long. They sold the house to the Kreuzberg family who, as mentioned above, were related to Bonnie Wehrend. The Kreuzbergs sold the house to Alex (Jr.) and Marguerite Takacs in 1962. The Takacs family became another of Leclaire's longtime residents, living in their house on Longfellow Avenue for over 40 years.

1022 Longfellow - Edwin Schlechte Home

The home at 1022 Longfellow Ave. was built in 1929 by Theuer Construction Company. Theuer completed the house just in time for the owner, Edwin Schlechte, to bring home his bride, Alice Bardelmeier Schlechte, following their marriage on September 18, 1929.

The Schlechte family was firmly embedded in Leclaire with Edwin's parents and siblings living within two blocks of the new house. Edwin's father and brother lived behind them on Ruskin Avenue, two sisters lived at 1014 Longfellow Ave. and his brother Arno had an extra lot next to 1014 Longfellow Ave. where he raised irises. Edwin's father, August, and brother, Arno, were machinists at the N. O. Nelson Company, and Edwin worked as a blacksmith for the same company. Within a few years, Alice's parents and her only sibling, Oscar Bardelmeier, both built houses on Franklin Avenue in Leclaire.



Wedding portrait of Edwin and Alice (Bardelmeier) Schlechte. (Ruth Heepke)

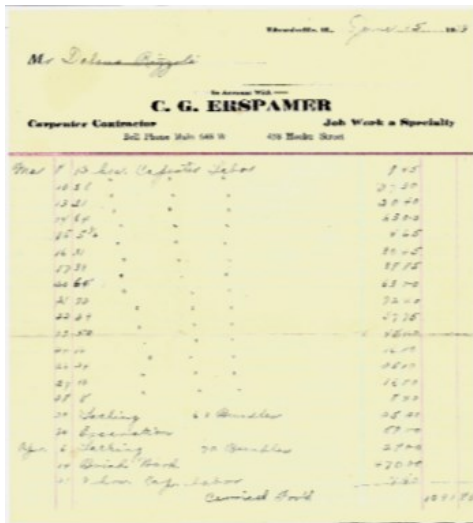
Edwin and Alice Schlechte had just one child, Ruth Schlechte Heepke, who has been generous in sharing stories and photographs of her happy childhood in Leclaire. Ruth's mother, Alice, lived in the house on Longfellow for almost 60 years.



Edwin Schlechte and his daughter, Ruth Ann (age 3) in 1934. Edwin loved to grow roses, and they are posed here among his roses in the backyard of 1022 Longfellow Avenue. (Ruth Schlechte Heepke)

1024 Longfellow - The Daliso Rizzoli Home

The last of the four houses, at 1024 Longfellow Ave., was completed in 1923 by Edwardsville contractor Ciro Erspamer, for his nephew, Daliso Rizzoli. Daliso was born in Hurley, Wisconsin, in 1889, the fourth of six children born to Italian immigrants, Joseph and Clementina Erspamer Rizzoli. His family moved to LeClaire in 1892 when his father obtained a job in the Cabinet Shop of the N. O. Nelson Manufacturing Company. He grew up in the house at the northeast corner of Jefferson and Hale and, like his father, worked in the LeClaire factories.



Invoice for construction of the house at 1024 Longfellow Avenue. Total bill: \$1,091.85

His father was later one of the men that founded the Edwardsville Planing Mill where Daliso also would find employment.

Daliso married twice, the first time to Essa Hicks who gave him two children, George and Helen, before she tragically died at the age of 23 in 1916. In 1923 Daliso remarried and brought his bride, Oda Gatchel, along with his two children from his first marriage, George and Helen, home to the new bungalow on Longfellow.

Oda and Daliso had two boys, Charles and Joseph, who became part of the crew of children in the neighborhood that played together on Longfellow.

In 1953, the Rizzolis sold the house on Longfellow to Allen and Leona Halbe. Like many in LeClaire, they were moving next to family. Allen Halbe's mother, Pauline, was a Schlechte. Allen and Edwin Schlechte, who lived next door, were second cousins.



Above are Daliso "Deli" and Oda Rizzoli in front of their home on Longfellow Avenue. At left are some of the children who lived on or near Longfellow circa 1932. From left, Joseph and Charles Rizzoli of 1024 Longfellow, Ruth Schlechte (later Heepke) of 1022 Longfellow, and Geraldine Schwager (later Anderson) of 205 McKinley Avenue.

(Christine Taul)



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

With a little luck, and a LOT less rain, Friends of LeClaire will complete a full schedule of events, activities and meetings in the coming year. Please check the 2020 FOL Calendar below and let us know if you are willing to volunteer.

At festivals or the Goshen Market, where FOL are present for four hours or more, a schedule is set up so that no one needs to work more than two hours. If you are unsure of what to do, Friends of LeClaire will pair you with a veteran volunteer. No one works alone, and this is a great way to meet your neighbors and make new friends.

And, just a reminder, although we love having volunteers who are also members, volunteers do not need to be members of FOL. If you appreciate the work of FOL, join us as we garden at LeClaire Park and at the Children's Museum, educate the public about the LeClaire National Historic District, work at LeClaire Parkfest, or participate in one of many other activities.

With many closures due to the COVID-19 virus, if unsure, please check with FOL (618-656-1294) before making a special trip to volunteer. Although the park clean-up originally scheduled for April 18 was cancelled, feel free to "adopt a flower bed" that needs weeding and work on your own. Gardening is an activity that can be done while being "socially distant."

Save the Dates!

APRIL - ALL EVENTS AND MEETINGS CANCELLED

- May 12 FOL Annual Meeting, 7 p.m.
- May 16 FOL at Goshen Market, 8 a.m. - Noon
- May 23 Bonifest Run LeClaire Water Station, 9 a.m.
- Jun 13 FOL at Route 66 Festival, 10 a.m. - Dusk
- Jun 16 FOL Meeting, 7 p.m.
- Jun 27 FOL at Goshen Market, 8 a.m. - Noon
- Jun 28 Band Concert and Ice Cream Social, 4 p.m.
- Jul 14 FOL Meeting, 7 p.m.
- Jul 18 FOL at Goshen Market, 8 a.m. - Noon
- Aug 11 FOL Meeting, 7 p.m.
- Aug 15 FOL at Goshen Market, 8 a.m. - Noon
- Sep 8 FOL Meeting, 7 p.m.
- Sep 19 FOL at Goshen Market, 8 a.m. - Noon
- Oct 10 FOL at Goshen Market, 8 a.m. - Noon
- Oct 13 FOL Meeting, 7 p.m.
- Oct 17 LeClaire Park Fall Clean-Up, 9 a.m.
- Oct 18 LeClaire Parkfest, Noon - 5 p.m.
- Nov 10 FOL Meeting, 7 p.m.
- Dec 8 FOL Holiday Social, 7 p.m.

For information regarding postponements or cancellations, call 618-656-1294 or check the Historic LeClaire Facebook page.